

In the beginning...God Genesis 1:1-3

Discover why it's reasonable to believe that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Science, philosophy, and history reveal to us a mountain of evidence for the existence of the God of Genesis. Faith in God is, therefore, not a blind leap into the dark but the height of reason.

- Turn to Genesis 1
- There are many questions you'll answer in life... some important, some not
- For Julie - one of the most important came **10 years, 5 months ago...**
 - o "Will you marry me?" - simple question with HUGE ramifications!
 - o If she would have said no...
 - I would have been crushed... probably in a ditch somewhere
 - She'd still be in Dallas, architect, maybe married (I like to think not!)
 - Worst of all - we wouldn't have Luke & Gracie!
- There are a few all-important questions you've got to answer in life - change everything

Top of the list... **Does God exist?**

- Question we're confronted with in first verse of Genesis - **read 1:1**
 - o Moses declared in no uncertain terms - YES
 - o **So is that true or not?**
- **THE MOST important question because it determines everything about your life**
 - o **If you say NO:**
 - Wasting your time this morning - sleep in & watch football
 - Do whatever makes you happy - all that matters in life
 - There's no transcendent "right" & "wrong"
 - There's just preferences - yours no more valid than mine
 - So quite worrying about right & wrong - just try to be happy
 - Because this life is all you get - *CARPE DEIM*
 - o **On the other hand, if you answer the question YES:**
 - That changes everything!
 - Coming to church is the best possible use of time - come to worship & learn about your Creator
 - Life isn't about happiness - about knowing & pleasing this God
 - He defines "right" & "wrong"
 - You belong to Him
 - His promise of a life to come gives you hope, peace, motivation
- Your entire life from this moment on hinges on your answer to this question

I know this from experience. Let me share my story with you...

- Grew up in Christian home - attended church - accepted Jesus as a child
 - o Always at youth group - read Christian books
 - o Assumed I had everything about God figured out...
- Until I came to A&M - began to struggle with multiple theological issues:
 - o election - seemed intellectually unreasonable
 - o evolution - seems like there's at least some strong evidence for it

- They were just interesting questions for most of college... until my Senior year
 - o Rough time - discouraged - very lonely
 - o Questions came back, took hold of me, wouldn't let go
 - filled me with doubt - maybe God doesn't exist - maybe it's all made up
- Ironically: doubt took hold right as it was time to head to Grace retreat - Pine Cove
 - o Already signed up, roommates going, lots of girls! nothing better to do - so I went
 - o But didn't have any fun! Depressed, wanted to be alone
 - Didn't talk to anyone about it - afraid they'd drop me off in Tyler!
 - o Stayed in my cabin - grabbed my journal - decided this is it - I'm going to decide
- Well I'm preaching to you this morning... so you can probably guess which way I went!!
 - o Took hours of labored, emotional reflection before I finally got on my knees & decided my answer was: YES

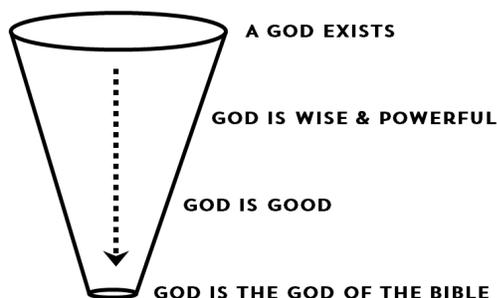
This morning I want to tell you WHY I answered YES

Why I believe with all my heart that God exists

- I'll use science, logic, & scripture to demonstrate that it's REASONABLE to believe
- I can't PROVE it
 - o then Christianity would be about proof, not faith - it's not
- But I can PROVE that...
 - o It's REASONABLE to believe
 - o It's actually MORE REASONABLE to believe that He does than that He doesn't
- Let me share evidence that I hope it will lead you to answer YES
- If you've already answered YES - I hope you'll take notes & share this evidence

Here's my plan – a funnel

Look at the Evidence



So, let's start broad - with evidence that a god exists....

EXHIBIT 1: Law of Cause and Effect

- The law states: **every event has a preceding cause**
 - o everything that exists or occurs was caused by something
 - o **John Macquarrie**
"Science proceeds on the assumption that whatever events occur in the world can be accounted for in terms of other events."
- **let me illustrate: blue crayon mark across the living room wall**
 - o asked each of my kids... "Did you do this?" "NO"
 - o I didn't, Mommy didn't, no one else has been in the house so... one of you is lying!
 - o How do I know that? Because of the law of Cause and Effect!
- **We live in a world that always operates according to the law of cause and effect.**
 - o No exceptions - no examples of something coming from nothing

- The whole universe is built on cause and effect.
- **So, let's talk about the universe. This universe is one very big effect.**
 - Full of an immeasurable amount of matter and energy in constant motion.
 - Based on law of cause & effect, there must be a cause for all this matter & energy
- **What is that cause? Most, if not all scientists would answer, the Big Bang.**
 - All matter & energy compressed into the space of a marble
- **OK, great - but where did all that compressed matter and energy come from?**
- **The Bible gives us a very reasonable answer... God - God is the First Cause**
 - All-powerful, eternal, exists outside and independent from the universe.
 - Not subject to the laws of physics, because He created all of those laws.
 - He is **the Uncaused Cause** - He is the reason that all things exist.
- **What is the alternative** offered by those who deny the existence of God?...
 - The cause of the Big Bang is **NOTHING**.
 - **Quentin Smith**, an atheist...
 - “The most reasonable belief is that we came from nothing, by nothing, and for nothing.”
 - **Stephen Hawking**, brilliant physicist, not a believer in God...
 - "Spontaneous creation is the reason why the universe exists...It is not necessary to invoke God."
 - Do you grasp what he's saying?
 - Most reasonable explanation for universe = spontaneous "POP!"
 - Creation without a creator - universe without a cause
 - Is that *possible*? YES
 - But is it likely? About as likely as crayon mark spontaneously appearing!
 - If God exists, then there is an explanation, a cause, for the existence of the universe
 - If He doesn't, then there is ultimately no explanation for all that exists
- Doesn't PROVE God exists
- But does show that it's actually MORE REASONABLE to believe He does

So far - just evidence that a god exists - not particular god of the Bible

EXHIBIT 2: A Well-Designed World

- Let's say you are walking on the beach and stumble upon a **watch**
 - What's most reasonable to believe?
 - created by a random, spontaneous, lucky combo of sand, air, water?
 - or created by a skilled watchmaker who sold it to a clutz?
 - Obviously 2nd option!! Masterful design demands a watchmaker
- **That's the argument from design**
 - Our universe displays a staggering level of design: that's evidence for a designer
 - Geneticist Francis Collins, was an atheist, now is a believer, wrote, "When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants – the gravitational constant, various constants about the strong and weak nuclear force, etc. – that have precise values. If any one of those constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the point where we see it. Matter would not have been able to coalesce, there would have been no galaxy, stars, planets or people."
 - As if all the dials were set just right
 - Statistical probability of that happening by chance? Virtually zero!
 - **Michael Turner**
 - "The precision is as if one could throw a dart across the entire universe and hit a bull's-eye one millimeter in diameter on the other side."

- **Cambridge Astronomer, Sir Fred Hoyle**
 - coined the term Big Bang
 - not a Christian

"If a tornado went through a junkyard, creating a functional 747... that would be child's play by comparison!"

"The fact that life exists anywhere in the universe, can only be explained by the pre-existence of some gigantic intelligence which, if you wish, you may call God."
 - **Gee, thanks!! I think I will!**
- **Again - does not PROVE God - just proves that it's MORE REASONABLE to believe**
- **Or think about it this way, as the philosopher Alvin Plantinga put it...**
 - Playing poker - I dealt 20 hands in a row & every time, I ended up with all 4 Aces
 - What would you say?
 - "What incredible luck!"
 - NO - "You cheat!!" - Old West, grab gun!
 - Possible that it's random luck? Yes
 - But likely, NO!
 - Most reasonable explanation = I cheated
 - Just as most reasonable explanation for design of universe = Designer
- **Intricacy, order, & beauty of universe declares power & wisdom of God**
 - **Ps 19:1-2** - CONSTANTLY declares God's glory
The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.
 - Therefore, **Rom 1:20**
For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.
 - No one can claim they didn't have enough info to believe in God
 - They CHOSE not to believe the clear testimony of creation
- Proves more REASONABLE to believe
 - not just a god
 - a god who is powerful & wise

EXHIBIT 3: Man's Moral Nature

- Humans have much in common with animal kingdom - cells, DNA
- **BUT there are some things that set us apart from all other life such as MORALITY**
 - All mature humans have an innate sense of "right" & "wrong"
 - a conscience that labels things "good" or "evil"
 - when we see evil, we cry out for justice
 - common characteristic in all societies
 - all call murder, rape, theft "wrong"
 - all call sharing and sacrifice and charity "right"
- **So where does our moral nature come from?**
- **For those who believe that God does not exist, the answer must be: evolution.**
 - No God - so no one to define a standard of right and wrong
 - There's only what evolution has programmed into us
- **But here's the problem with that answer: morality often leads us to work against evolution.**
 - Basic tenant: survival of the fittest
 - **But morality often fights against survival of the fittest.**

- **What does morality condemn?**
 - Rape - which would pass on your genetic code
 - Murder - which would thin out your rivals so you would have more opportunity to reproduce
 - Theft - which would increase your resources and give your progeny a better chance at survival
- **And what does morality celebrate?**
 - Above all else: sacrificing your life for a stranger. Die for your family - that's great. But die for a stranger - that's even better. When a soldier sacrifices himself for another soldier - we praise that and reward that act with a medal of honor.
 - Why? Why would we commend an act that ended his life and eliminated his chance to pass on his genetic code? That's a violation of basic evolutionary progress!
 - We praise that which works against survival of the fittest and condemn that which works for it!
 - Now in recent years, those who deny the existence of God have nuanced their answer. They explain morality as a product of evolutionary progress among groups early humans - that somehow within a group setting evolution could generate characteristics that run contrary to individual survival of the fittest.
 - That is *possible*. It's a complex answer that seems like quite a stretch, but I guess it's possible.
- But is it likely? Is it really more reasonable than believing that we are moral creatures because we were created by a moral God who made us in His image with an innate, inescapable sense of right and wrong, good and evil?
 - To me, that seems far more reasonable an explanation of human morality.
 - As Paul explains in **Rom 2:14-15**
For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law... they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them
 - We are moral because our moral God created us in His image - He placed a conscience - an internal moral compass within us.
- Once again, we can't prove that God exists, but we can prove that it is MORE REASONABLE to believe that He does than that He doesn't.

SUMMARY so far... REASONABLE to believe that a powerful, wise, good, righteous Creator God exists. But all 3 monotheistic religions teach this: Islam, Judaism, & Christianity. So why should we believe in the God of the Bible rather than, for example, the God of the Quran?

Let's narrow it down even more with 3 last exhibits that give logical and historical evidence for the God of the Bible...

EXHIBIT 4: Witness of History

- Christianity is a historical faith - it is anchored in the history of this world.
 - The Bible references countless people, places, and events as if they really happened.
 - And the most important of those historical events are the ones that revolve around Jesus - His birth, death, and resurrection.
- If those events really did happen - then Christianity is true and reliable
- If they didn't happen - then Christianity is a farce
- Fortunately, there's mountains of evidence for the historical reliability of both the Bible and the Resurrection.
 - In fact, there is so much evidence that it is easier to believe that it's true than to try to create a good explanation for how it could have all made been made up.

- That doesn't keep people from trying to explain away the history of Bible - you'll see countless books at B&N denying the biblical Jesus. That's controversial, so it sells well, so people keep writing elaborate theories to explain it all away.
- That doesn't change the fact that the MOST REASONABLE explanation for the incredibly accurate history you'll find in the Bible is that it really happened.
- I'd like to walk you through all that evidence - but I don't have nearly enough time!!
- So, I've written a couple short articles for you outlining the evidence - one for the New Testament, one for the resurrection. I'll post them on FB and Twitter this afternoon.
 - They're short. If you read them and want more, get one of the books I'll mention later this morning.

EXHIBIT 5: Existence of Love

- We've already talked about our moral nature and how it suggests that a moral Creator exists. Well chief among our moral traits is love.
 - I'm not talking about romantic or sexual love - that's easy to explain from evolution.
 - I'm talking about sacrificial love - true love that sacrifices self for the good of another - that highest expression of love.
- Where did that come from?
 - I don't think evolution has a good answer
 - I also don't think any of the other monotheistic religions has a good answer
 - How many persons does love require? At least 2. You can't have love if you're absolutely alone.
 - But in both Islam and Judaism, that's exactly what God was before Creation... ALONE.
 - He's not the author or giver of love because He couldn't even know what love was before He made us.
 - So Islam and Judaism can't give us a satisfactory explanation for this beautiful and amazing thing called love.
 - But the Bible can: it's called the Trinity!
 - The Trinity perfectly explains love. Father, Son, and Spirit loving one another, praising and glorifying one another from eternity past. The Triune God is the author and creator of true love because it is who and what He is and has always been.
 - **John 17:24**
 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."
 - God has never been alone. Before the universe existed, Father, Son, and Spirit loved and glorified one another.
 - **1 John 4:16,19**
 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love... We love, because He first loved us.
 - **George Marsden**
 "The ultimate reason that God creates is not to remedy some lack in God, but to extend that perfect internal communication of the triune God's goodness and love.... The universe is an explosion of God's glory. Perfect goodness, beauty, and love radiate from God and draw creatures to ever increasingly share in the Godhead's joy and delight.... The ultimate end of creation, then, is union in love between God and loving creatures."
 - These statements can ONLY be true if God is multi-personal. He is not love if He is alone. Only the Trinity, the God of the Bible, explains love.

EXHIBIT 6: Magnificence of Grace

- According to all other religions, how do you get right with this Creator God? Through works.
 - o Keep the law of Judaism; practice the 5 pillars of Islam
 - o That's actually a very sensible answer!
 - If you were creating a religion to keep people in line, then that's exactly what you'd teach - that obedience to the rules is required to be okay with your god.
- But what's the Bible's answer: How do you get right with this Creator? Through grace!
 - o **Eph 2:8-9**
For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
 - o You simply receive forgiveness and eternal life as an absolutely free gift.
 - o You don't DO anything!
 - o Because God has already done everything you need.
 - Became one of us, took the punishment for our sins, defeated sin & death for us
 - Now offers us all the benefits for free!
 - o Who would make that up!?!?!?!?
 - That's crazy!
 - Giving away the most valuable thing for FREE - no strings attached
 - Not how you keep people in line
 - Nobody would make up a religion like that - opposite of all others

That's why I'm convinced, it's gotta be true!

- o No one would make up the gospel, just like no one would make up the Trinity!

The most reasonable explanation for the historicity of the Bible, the existence of sacrificial love, and the magnificence of grace... is that the God of the Bible exists. He is the most reasonable explanation for the world we live in.

That's what I finally concluded after hours of struggle on my bunk at Pine Cove 16 yrs ago.

- I couldn't prove that the God of the Bible exists
- But I could prove that it's more REASONABLE, more LOGICAL to conclude that He does than that He doesn't.

I just lined up the evidence...

- If He doesn't exist - if there is no God, then that means that...
- But what if the God of the Bible does exist? Then...
- Which of those answers to the question is more reasonable?

Once I finally laid out all the evidence, it was clear to me 16 years ago. I chose YES.

- I couldn't explain everything about God - I still can't.
- And that's okay, because the evidence convinced me. He's REAL

Why I Believe God Exists

If God doesn't exist

- Nothing produced everything
- Chaos produced order
- Non-life produced life
- There's no meaning
- There's no morality
- There's no hope

If God does exist

- There is a cause for everything
- His design created order
- His power created life
- There's meaning
- There's morality
- There's hope

Why I Believe God Exists

1. Law of Cause & Effect
2. A Well-Designed Universe
3. Man's Moral Nature

A powerful,
wise, good
God

-
4. Witness of History
 5. Existence of Love
 6. Magnificence of Grace

The God of the
Bible

So where are you with this question?

- Made up your mind that the answer is NO
 - o I hope you'll reconsider the evidence.
 - o Fact that you're here this morning makes me hopeful that you'll give it a fresh look.
 - o I'm hope you'll come talk to me.
- Made up your mind that the answer is YES
 - o You believe that the God of the Bible exists, that He loves you, and that His Son died for you so you could have eternal life.
 - o Praise GOD! You have reason for peace and hope in life.
 - o I hope you'll share the evidence with others...
- Haven't decided
 - o That's okay - ok to wrestle with doubt
 - o But not ok to give up
 - what agnostics have done! Surrender! You've given up on life's most important question - it shapes everything about you - you can't give up!!
 - o Keep studying, keep talking, keep praying, keep wrestling with the evidence
 - o And let me give you some Resources
 - Two articles - resurrection & reliability of New Testament on www.grace-bible.org or Twitter: @GraceBibleBlake
 - Timothy Keller - *Reason for God*
 - C.S. Lewis - *Mere Christianity*
 - Lee Strobel - *Case for Christ* AND *Case for a Creator*
 - o Come talk if you still have questions.